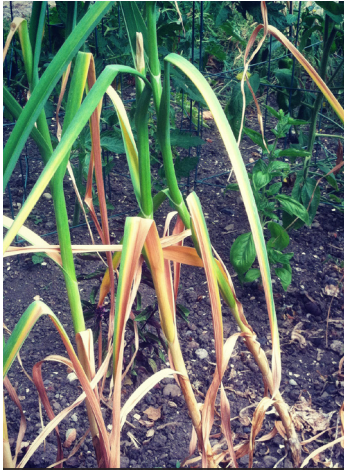




How-To: **HARVESTING GARLIC**

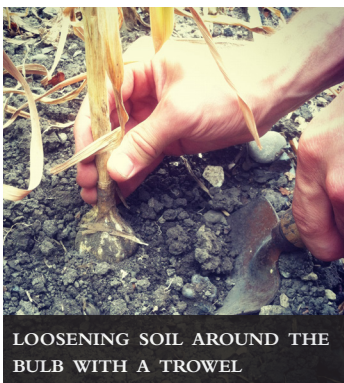
Garlic spends many months in the garden – from fall, over the winter, through spring and into summer! Here's how and when to harvest this unique crop.



THIS GARLIC IS READY TO HARVEST



TESTING THE SOIL TO SEE HOW LOOSE IT IS



LOOSENING SOIL AROUND THE BULB WITH A TROWEL

HARVESTING SCAPES

Before the garlic bulb is ready to harvest, the plant provides a tasty precursor. Usually in late May or early June, garlic plants will develop a “scape” or seed pod. This scape looks like a rounded green shoot, sent straight out the top of the plant. When this shoot curls once, clip it close to where it emerges from the plant. These garlic scapes have a garlicky and slightly sweet flavor. They are excellent cooked whole like asparagus or added into other dishes.

WHEN TO HARVEST GARLIC HEADS

The garlic plant is tall and stalky and green, and its familiar-looking white bulb is buried underground, out of sight. This makes knowing when to harvest a little tricky.

In the Pittsburgh area, we can count on garlic being ready around late June or early July, when hot temperatures begin to stick around for the summer. But the exact timing varies from year to year. It's important to harvest at the correct time; with too little time in the ground, papery wrappers won't have had time to form around each clove. On the other hand, leaving garlic in the ground too long increases the chances that the papery wrappers around the entire head of garlic will begin to disintegrate, and the cloves will begin to pull away from the central stalk. This process allows soil and moisture to get inside the head of garlic and encourages rotting. Garlic harvested too early or too late may still work for cooking fresh, but it won't store well.

So how will you know the right time to pick your garlic? If you had a field of garlic, you would probably dig a few heads up to check and see if they were ready to pull. But in a garden, each head is a little more precious! Here's the number one way to tell that your garlic is ready to harvest:

The plant's 3-4 bottom leaves will be yellow or brown and wilted, and the top 5-6 leaves will still be green.

That's it! Some of the outer papers around the head will probably be disintegrating, which is normal. If garlic is harvested at the right time, there will still be some intact papers around each head, and individual cloves will be protected by their own layers. The layers around each clove are still alive, so expect them to look thicker than paper, until the garlic has dried.

HOW TO HARVEST

- Loosen the soil around the garlic plants. Use a trowel, shovel, or digging fork. Stay a few inches away from the garlic heads – you don't want to slice through a bulb!



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HARVESTED GARLIC, READY TO CURE

- If the soil is loose enough, reach in around each garlic head and give it a hearty pull. Don't pull by the stem, as it may break off from the garlic bulb.
- If the soil is too hard, work your way closer to the bulb with a small hand tool, like a trowel, until you can grasp the head of garlic and give it a pull.
- Brush the majority of the soil off the garlic head and leave the roots and stem attached.

Your garlic is ready to eat, and tastes delicious fresh. You can use it in recipes just like any other garlic. Wash heads that you intend to eat fresh, and store them in the refrigerator. If you have enough garlic to store some, you will need to cure it so it will store without rotting.

CURING GARLIC FOR STORAGE

Take these steps to dry garlic for storage:

- Make small bunches (less than 10 heads each) by tying together garlic stems.
- Hang the bunches somewhere airy and dry, in the shade. The ideal temperature range for curing is between 60-70 degrees.
- After a couple of weeks, when the leaves and stems are completely dry, clip the stem and roots off of the garlic bulb.
- Brush any remaining soil from the bulb – it's ok to remove a couple of papery layers to get down to a smooth, clean layer. But be sure to leave some papers to protect the heads.
- Store in a cool, dry, dark place.

Well-cured garlic should last for many months, and can also be used for seed garlic in the fall.



CURING BRADDOCK FARMS' GARLIC HARVEST